
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MONTH

MARCH 2014

JOINT MESSAGE

During International Women's Month, we, as representatives of the international community in Albania and members of the technical working group on 'Women in decision-making', reflect upon the progress made thus far, and the challenges that remain, in achieving gender equality in Albania.

We fully embrace the United Nations' International Women's Day theme for this year, "Equality for Women is Progress for All." Growing evidence from countries around the globe has shown that greater equality for women translates to greater prosperity for the whole of society. As early as 1945, the UN Charter established the principle of equality between women and men as one of the major pillars of democratic progress. This holds true for Albania today, twenty-three years after the beginning of democratic rule.

We stand together with one common message: women and girls of this country have the right to participate equally in all spheres of public life without discrimination. Taking effective measures to reinforce the protection of human rights and anti-discrimination policies is a key priority for Albania to move forward in fulfilling its citizens' European Union aspirations. It is also one of the basic commitments Albania has undertaken as an OSCE participating State. Furthermore, a Council of Europe Recommendation from 2003 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making encourages CoE member states to promote the representation of women in political or public life at a level that should not fall below 40%.

We congratulate the government for fulfilling the 30% quota for women representation in the Cabinet of Ministers, a first-ever achievement. Revisions to the law before the June 2013 elections also provided an opportunity to increase the number of women in Parliament; regrettably, women continue to be under-represented in public office, including in parliament, as underlined in the European Commission's 2013 Progress Report and the OSCE Presence in Albania's 2013 Permanent Council report.

We urge political parties to comply with standing legal provisions concerning the inclusion of women on candidate lists, and when possible surpass minimum standards to demonstrate commitment toward gender equality in decision making. We urge the Parliament, the government, and all political parties to take concrete steps in creating a more enabling environment for Albanian women to advance in political and public positions. We support joint efforts of civil society organizations and women's groups working on advancing gender equality in Albania.

Next year's local elections provide an opportunity to do just this. We encourage all political parties to increase opportunities for women's equal representation at both the councilor and mayoral level. In addition, we believe gender provisions in the Electoral Code should be strengthened further.



As international partners of Albania, we are committed to providing the necessary support and technical expertise to help achieve these goals. The first steps have been made: laws are in place or being drafted. Now it is time to enforce and implement them in all areas where the position of women is in question.

Our conviction is that the respect for women's rights strikes at the very heart of the respect for rule of law in society. During International Women's Month, let us reaffirm our common commitment to women's rights and move forward convinced that equality for women is progress for all.